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DEPT PASS TO EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE  
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COLLECTIVE  
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SUBJECT: JAMAICA: THE FUTURE OF THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY

REF: KINGSTON 1336

Classified By: Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James T. Heg,  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

#### Summary

1.(C) In the recent September 2007 general elections the ruling People's National Party (PNP) was narrowly defeated after 18 years in power. While the official total seat count for the 60-seat Parliament was 27 for the PNP and 33 for the then-Opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), there are still pending issues and the final tally may change. Thus far, former Prime Minister (PM), Portia Simpson-Miller (PSM) has refused to accept defeat with grace and dignity on the basis of the preliminary counts on election eve, September 3. She was quoted at the PNP annual conference on September 16, saying, &We did not lose the election, it was taken from us(.8 (Note: While the election was not without incidents of impropriety, the Organization of American States (OAS) declared the elections &free and fair.8 End Note.) Now there are many questions about where the PNP will go from here, and what will be the fate of Portia Simpson-Miller. End Summary.

#### The 69th Annual PNP Conference, September 16

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2.(C) Poloff attended the PNP,s 69th Annual Conference, on Sunday, September 16. The event had a lot of pomp and circumstance, but lacked in substance. Normally PNP annual conferences are three day affairs that follow earlier regional conferences and the elections of regional delegates. However, due to the timing of the election this year, set by then-PM PSM, the regional conferences were not held, and due to the expenditures of money for campaigning and the poor results, the conference was shortened to just one day. According to the constitution of the PNP, a properly convened annual conference allows for the election of party officers and the President of the party, along with four vice presidents. The agenda for the conference listed &Election of Officers ) (President and 4 Vice Presidents)8 as the fourth item of the day. However, shortly after the conference began (90 minutes later than scheduled) the Chairman of the PNP, Paul Burke, announced that the National Executive Committee (NEC) had met during the previous week and decided that all current officers would continue in their positions and that no elections would be held during this short conference. This position was confirmed by the party,s legal adviser, but not well received by all delegates present. Former Member of Parliament (MP) P.D. Knight objected on the grounds that convening the conference

without holding elections contradicted the party,s constitution. Former PM P.J. Patterson came to the microphone and confirmed Knight,s position, i.e. that it would violate the constitution to skip over the election of officers. After much arguing and many delegates taking turns at the microphones, PSM took center stage, asked for order and announced that it was the NEC's position, that since the regional delegations had not met, all procedures could not be followed, and therefore she recommended that a motion be brought to the floor to allow the postponement of electing officers until such time as the regional conferences took place. The motion was seconded by PNP Vice President, and former Minister of National Security, Peter Phillips. A voice vote was held and the motion carried. (Note: When P.D. Knight tried to express his opinion, he was almost shouted off the floor. Only when the General Secretary, Paul Buchanan, shouted for order, and reminded the supporters that the PNP values diverse opinions and democratic practices, was Comrade Knight, allowed to speak. End Note.)

#### The Enemy Within

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3.(SBU) After the motion to skip election of officers passed, there were many attempts by rank-and-file delegates to express their opinions on the matter, although several speakers simply wanted to express their unfailing support for PSM as party president. Other delegates vociferously maintained that the reason for the PNP,s recent electoral short-coming was the "enemies from within." Two or three speakers expressed the opinion that there were candidates within the party who simply went through the motions and did not fully support the party. (Note: No names were stated, but it was clearly insinuated that some candidates had not wanted PSM to win, and therefore had undermined the overall campaign. End Note.) The theme of the 69th Annual Conference was &One Family( looking to the future,8 and the party leaders were careful to reinforce this message throughout the conference.

4.(C) Before the conference opened, the local media speculated that the failure to win the majority would likely spell the end of PSM,s political career. However, after witnessing the opening of the conference and the entrance to the arena of the PNP senior members, it was very clear that Portia still has a special place in the hearts and minds of the majority of the PNP faithful. From the first sighting of PSM, AKA Sista P,, with rhythmic music booming in the background singing, &Portia Power...Follow Portia...8 it became very clear who this convention was all about. The music continued for more than 10 minutes during the grand entrance of the leaders with three different songs, clearly original compositions, about Portia and who she is and what she stands for. (Note: Another interesting section of lyrics talked about how Portia is not afraid to pray everyday and how she loves all the people. At times the convention swung between a Portia love-fest and a Christian revival session. Peter Tosh,s reggae-beat version of the 27th Psalm was frequently played, and also very well received by the party faithful. End Note.) Attendees vigorously waved yellow and orange flags with &Portia8 as they danced to the music. PSM,s face and name could be seen on all manner of clothing worn by her supporters. &Sista P8 was also repeatedly referred to as the &Mother8 of the PNP family. Throughout the one-day event, at key points PSM got out of her chair and danced out to center stage, waving to the masses, driven on after many shouts of &Portia, Portia!8 It was very clear from the moment Portia walked on the stage that she was the focus of the event and remained the unquestioned leader of the grass roots PNP supporters.

#### PSM and the PNP,s future plans

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5.(SBU) When PSM finally began her Party Leader,s address, 75 minutes after its scheduled start time, she began by saying, &The PNP is alive and well, and prepared to take back the government of this country. But I want to qualify

that by saying by peaceful means. Comrades, I love you all!8 (Note: The PNP shows its socialist roots by the repeated use of the term comrade. End Note.) PSM also stressed in her speech that she accepted the results of the election, but was very careful to emphasize she was not using the word, &defeat.8 During her 90 minute speech there were only one or two references to the PNP being an opposition party now and much of the beginning of her speech sounded like a continuation of her campaigning speeches. Her speech was interlaced with references to the JLP buying the election; she claimed the JLP outspent the PNP ten to one in campaign expenditures. "PSM's speech has attracted considerable negative commentary in the media. For example, popular radio talk show host Wilmot Perkins called it 'disgraceful' on September 17, and the Gleaner on September 18 called it "outrageous" and "bellicose" and a threat to the stability of Jamaica.

6.(C) Finances were mentioned throughout the day, and the lack of fundraising was frequently cited as one of the biggest problems with the PNP,s campaign. The PNP claims that they did not take money from special interests and they are indebted to no special interest groups, domestic or international, as a result. (Note: There is speculation that some PNP campaign funds came from Cuba and Venezuela. At the beginning of her speech, PSM recognized &our comrades from overseas.8 Also, Poloff,s PNP contact pointed out that there was a Cuban delegation present at the conference. End Note.) PSM claimed that the JLP had spent over J\$50 Million (about US\$714,000) on their campaign and that is why they had been able to take more seats. The party general secretary, Buchanan, continued to emphasize the need for

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money, and during the wait time for the Party President to take the podium, encouraged delegates to bring donations to the front and announced the amounts and donors over the public address system.

Conclusion

7.(C) The PNP is still in a reactionary mood, and many members of the party appear to be in a state of denial. However, one thing comes across clearly: it is far too early to write the political obituary for Portia Simpson-Miller. While she may lack the higher education and polish of many Jamaican politicians, she does not lack in spirit, drive, or self-confidence. Further, she is strongly supported by the working class and by women of Jamaica in general. There are cracks forming in the upper echelons of the PNP; clearly, many of the long-time players are not happy with PSM at the helm. However, her closest rival, MP Peter Phillips, was very careful to show no signs of dissent publicly during this event. He frequently was seen whispering to PSM, and stated publicly more than once that PSM was the President of the PNP and she would remain so for the future. Former PM P.J. Patterson (PJP) showed that he is still active in the party, being placed at the front table and referred to frequently by various officers of the party. (Note: Some people believe that PJP is still pulling the strings of the party, and that PSM is his puppet. End Note.)

8.(SBU) While the new JLP government led by PM Bruce Golding (BG) has publicly held out the proverbial olive branch to the PNP, all signs point to a negative response. Much criticism was leveled at the JLP and BG for asking PSM to sit down and &talk about Jamaica8 during his inauguration speech. More than one PNP speaker highlighted this as proof that the JLP is not prepared to govern. At one point during her speech, PSM claimed she and the PNP Opposition would be &the JLP,s worst nightmare.8 There was absolutely no talk of finding ways to work with the JLP for the greater good of Jamaica, or plans to sit down and speak privately with the new PM. There were references to the PNP having &one of the most brilliant sets of lawyers you can think of8, an allusion to the pending constitutional issues, ballot recounts and any other possible challenges that might bring more seats back into the

PNP fold. Her message to the JLP was a warning, 8We will be watching you.8

9.(C) At this point, it appears the PNP has done little constructive planning for the immediate future of the party. They have hired two consultants from the University of the West Indies (UWI) to analyze the results of the election campaigns and prepare a report for the NEC of the party. The conference was hastily organized, and the leaders showed their lack of preparedness as they failed to give well-founded answers to their own delegates, questions. For now the biggest question hanging over the party is: does PNP stand for People,s National Party or Portia,s National Party?

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